



March 1, 2020

Commerce Committee
State Capitol Building, Room 504
Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: 860-240-0380; CEtestimony@cga.ct.gov

Re: OPPOSE HB 5263, AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROCESSING OF RABBITS FOR CONSUMPTION¹

Dear Co-Chair Hartley, Co-Chair Currey, Vice Chair Cohen, Vice Chair Rochelle, Ranking Member Martin, Ranking Member Buckbee, and Honorable Members of the Commerce Committee,

On behalf of the Connecticut-based supporters of The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the largest animal protection organization in the country, please accept this public hearing testimony in OPPOSITION to HB 5263—which promotes the slaughter of rabbits for food.

Many HSUS supporters in Connecticut fight to protect rabbits, and many also enjoy rabbits as household pets.² Rabbits are smart, sociable animals with unique personalities who would suffer if kept in conditions that would certainly occur with rabbits raised for food on a large scale, as seems to be the ultimate intent of this bill.³ Due to public demand, many cosmetic companies no longer test on rabbits, many furriers no longer produce coats made from the pelts of rabbits, and laws have been passed that disallow sale of commercially bred rabbits in pet stores. Industry leaders PetSmart and Petco no longer sell rabbits. A few years ago, the rabbit meat market was tested, and vigorous public outcry resulted in the discontinuation of the sale of rabbit meat by Whole Foods and other stores.⁴

Further, Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease (RHDV) is a concern for wild and domestic rabbits. RHDV was identified as an emerging risk in 2019⁵ and is now widespread in the western United States;

¹ <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2022/TOB/H/PDF/2022HB-05263-R00-HB.PDF>

² Learn more about rabbits at: <https://www.humanesociety.org/animals/rabbits>

³ Connecticut already has cruel, large scale “factory farms”: Hillandale Egg Farm in eastern Connecticut intensively confines millions of birds in battery cages, who spend their unnaturally short lifetimes languishing in crowded wire cages that frustrate nearly every natural instinct. We should not extend such obscene cruelty to another species.

⁴ <https://rabbit.org/victory-whole-foods-ends-rabbit-meat-sales/>

⁵ https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/downloads/emerging-risk-notice-rabbit.pdf

RHDV was confirmed in domestic rabbits in neighboring New York state in December 2021.⁶ If passed, HB 5263 may exacerbate spread of this highly transmissible and fatal disease.

Finally, in light of the emerging viral threats that jump the species barrier from animals to humans, like SARS, HIV-1, H1N1, MERS, and COVID-19,⁷ Connecticut's Department of Agriculture should instead be promoting plant-based markets, including expansion and innovation of plant-based proteins (and eventually, cultivated meat), to ensure a greater availability of more diverse, safe, and dependable protein sources.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours truly,



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⁶ <https://wildlifehealth.org/rabbit-hemorrhagic-disease-virus/>

⁷ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7470595/>